



Sustainable Development Applied to the Territory: What Balance for a Better Regional Management

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Summary:

For more than a decade, Morocco has been committed to a proactive policy of sustainable development through numerous reforms and operational programs in order to establish a solid foundation for economic development, improve the social and environmental resilience of the country and promote efficient and sustainable production models.

This being said, in order to achieve a systemic approach to sustainable development, we are confronted with specific structural problems and human situations that push us to further study the possibility of developing strategies that will allow us to involve all actors in the success and sustainability of the local project. What are these problems and what are the success factors and approaches necessary for regional sustainable development.

Key words: sustainable development- governance- resources- sustainability- culture- regional

Introduction

The objective of a controlled development in the respect of sustainable development is clearly stated in all the laws in force in Morocco as in the majority of African countries. But the concept of sustainable development is not based on a theoretical framework. The concept itself is still being debated. There is no consensus on the definition of local sustainability. The vagueness and paradigm is also found at the operational level, with local authorities and consultancies having to integrate the sustainability dimension into their analyses and recommendations, without having sufficient knowledge of the issue or methodological know-how. Each one is groping its way through the process of introducing sustainable development thinking into its usual project management approach.

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During the 1990s, the notion of sustainable development made its way. The need to preserve the quality of life, perceived in its social, economic, cultural and environmental dimensions, was gradually asserted, "Local sustainable development must guarantee a non-decreasing level of well-being for the local population in the long term" (Camagni, Gibelli, 1997). However, it seems useful to underline the perverse effects of the first measures enacted in favor of sustainable development as well as certain inconsistencies observed today in terms of territorial engineering. The absence of know-how in the field of sustainability, as much at the level of diagnoses as at the level of recommendations and transversal actions. This explains why the studies elaborated within the framework of the PDR, PDP or PAC, remain sectoral, why the "interactions" component is only tackled at the end of the process and why it only deals with certain aspects of sustainable development such as risks, housing and land, pollution and transport, urbanization and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, for example. Lack of understanding of local sustainability: While the goals of sustainable development are known, the conditions necessary for local sustainability have yet to be determined. Many of the relationships considered fundamental to local development are still subject to uncertainty and imprecision or are the subject of controversy among experts.

These three obstacles are found to varying degrees at all administrative levels, from ministries to local authorities. However, if sustainability is to be considered a major rather than a secondary goal of local development, action must be taken in three key areas: the organization of services, the training of decision-makers and community staff, and scientific research.

Inevitably, the rigidity of administrative structures clearly prevails over the motivation and goodwill of local actors. Any improvement therefore necessarily requires the invention of a transversal organizational mode that defines a new operating framework for analysis and action. But to be fully effective, this reorganization must be accompanied by training operations, intended for executives, elected officials and agents of the local authority, on the modalities of interrelation of services and the conduct of territorial projects, with a view to sustainable local development. Finally, scientists must contribute to the progress of knowledge on sustainability by working in two directions. Their contribution is expected, first of all, in the knowledge itself of the territory.

For any scientific object, the choice of a method is determined according to the problematic, the objectives sought and the light under which the phenomenon is studied. In the present case, our objective is to determine the conditions of a territorial engineering in adequacy with the sustainable development. In this perspective, our article will address the contradictions on sustainable development, the theories and approaches to be developed at different scales and different temporalities, to ensure a better local management.

A. Sustainable development and structural problems: a double-edged reality

When we conduct research on sustainable development, we sometimes encounter theoretical obstacles. The objective is then to remove these obstacles in order to resolve the underlying issue.

We sometimes encounter structural barriers that require a complete rethinking of the theory in order to remove them. This exists in the exact sciences for example. When it was proved that light has a constant speed whatever the medium it travels through, this raised a whole series of questions in classical physics. Once this lock was lifted by Einstein, it was necessary to revise a whole series of physics equations, which then appeared as a real revolution.

As far as sustainable development is concerned, we are also faced with structural problems. I will mention three of them. This does not mean that we should give up, it means that these are challenges and that our vision of sustainable development possesses some problems.

1. A contradiction between two terms

The first contradiction that we observe can be found in many works, in which it is not very clearly addressed either. It is a contradiction between the terms "development" and "sustainable". In the French term *development durable*, or in the original English term "sustainable development", the idea of sustainability conveys the idea that things are fixed, whereas the term development emphasizes the idea of a significant structural change. In this case, what is sustainable development? Is it a permanent revolution? The idea of sustainability would thus emphasize that the structure is always changing. Does it take up the idea, supported by Valéry Giscard D'Estaing during one of his speeches in 1974, of change in continuity?

We are therefore in a contradiction between two terms used together. Behind this question of terminology, which seems trivial, we have something deeper. When we look at the work on sustainable development, we realize that we are not really talking about sustainable development, but about sustainable growth, without reflecting on the transition from a qualitative to a quantitative dimension. In fact, we tend to ignore all this, for an extremely simple structural reason.

Sustainable development is the answer of the shepherd to the shepherdess in front of environmental policies. Why did the ONU commission mandate Gro Harlem Brundtland to write a report on sustainable development? It is a response to the rise of the environmentalist movements in the 60s, 70s and 80s, which made a rather radical criticism of the Establishment and which began to take on great importance. The commission's mission statement is extremely clear. It is to identify the means to take into account environmental problems while preserving the modes of production and the ways of life of our societies. It is therefore clearly about sustainable growth. From then on, we are in a permanent contradiction.

I don't have an answer. I ask myself the question, and the answer is not simple. We are in a kind of structural problem based on a contradiction that sustainable development cannot overcome. I think in particular that the theory of regrowth is not an answer to this problem, since it would be like replacing the plague with cholera by giving a radically opposite answer but in the same terms. This poses real problems.

2. The contradiction between the global and the local

The second contradiction is in the terms themselves. There is a kind of slogan that is increasingly difficult to understand. According to this slogan, we must "think globally and act locally". All the people who have implemented territorial policies, and there are many of them here, have quite quickly realized (e.g.: Agenda 21) that between the rational structural intention in which we are full of good intentions and the reality on the ground, with egoisms, rumors, personal interests, political stakes, conflicts of interest, groups of owners opposed to this or that project, there is a chasm. As a rule, the Local Agenda 21 becomes only a cosmetic tool that has produced mere declarations to mask the lack of an environmental policy. In this case, it is a kind of advertising product. By positioning ourselves from a local point of view, the interactions are no longer the same. We are no longer in these simple and rational interactions, we are in co-spatiality, with strong and not simple rational interactions. If we want to apply an Agenda 21 at the local level with the impression that we will be able, in a rational manner, to apply a certain number of rules, we are mistaken. The challenge is to know how we can theoretically understand these strong local interactions.

All this to say that any place is, depending on the point of view from which we place ourselves, both local and global.

3. The management of local resources

The third contradiction concerns the inventory of resources. What is a resource? Many people work on natural resources and built resources. Every time an object is present in an environment, it is not a resource in itself. Until we know how to use oil in ways other than floating cradles with babies in them, or caulking ships, oil is not really considered a resource. It's not until there's some use of that oil that it becomes a resource.

When we build, within the framework of territorial policies, a resource, it is not built at random. It conveys a certain political message and a certain message from the society that builds it. This is not trivial. It is almost never explained in sustainable development. Society identifies natural elements in order to build resources. This process is taken for granted, and it is not a trivial act.

In the end, depending on the decisions made, it is not the same resource even though it is the same forest. Which management should be favored in the context of sustainable development? If the forest is cut, it can no longer be used as a park. If it is left aside as a land reserve, it will become a wasteland. If it is used as a park, we will not be able to use its wood. This choice in the use of resources, which is a point that is not sufficiently addressed in the framework of sustainable development, requires, in my opinion, to be widely investigated.

We are thus faced with a set of questions and a great debate on the vision of the management of the territory, its potential, its skills and its resources. That said, in order to face this great challenge, we must position ourselves during this change which has been expressed for a decade and which includes an evolution at the level of local management, territorial engineering and the distribution of power, in other words decentralization and deconcentration. Morocco has made a great effort in this direction and has allowed several variables to be implemented and practiced at the level of the twelve regions. We will thus base ourselves on 3 variables that we find necessary for the effective realization of the Sustainable Development of any Moroccan territory.

B. Different variables for achieving sustainable development of the territory: the issue of territorial governance, the issue of sustainability, and the use of resources

While working on these contradictions and trying to provide answers, I realized that there were different ways of approaching sustainable development. We have difficulty identifying what sustainable development is because, in fact, there are several types of sustainable development. We can identify broad types of sustainable development, based on a certain number of variables, which partially allow us to answer the three previous questions: the mode of governance, the type of sustainability and the use of resources.

1. The challenges of territorial governance and its contribution to territorial projects

- A renewal of reflection on the general interest

By encouraging a project-based approach and giving local actors more room for manoeuvre, territorial governance raises the question of the notion of interest, which thus becomes a central point of political reflection. The general interest is no longer (or no longer only) dictated by a State - represented by the elected officials and civil servants of the major State bodies - which is above partisan politics and transcends individual interests.

On the contrary, it is in a way co-constructed by the actors in the territory who are responsible for giving substance to the general guidelines defined "from above". We are moving from a substantial definition of the general interest to a more procedural definition, close to the classic Anglo-Saxon

vision. As a result, the expression of the interests (or needs, visions, etc.) of local actors is no longer situated solely in the marginal space opened up by the contestation of public policies: it gains a central place. In other words, we are moving from the notion of general interest, a superior principle valid throughout the territory and at all scales, to that of co-constructed collective interest, which is much more contextualized, depending on the scale and the arena in which the decision or action is taken. Debates about values and priorities are thus questioned, with a view to greater transparency, but this also raises the crucial question of the fair expression of all the issues and the modes of arbitration between them... These new questions question the legitimacy of the collectives thus mobilized, both in terms of their functioning and of the products they produce. The notion of legitimacy (of the interests taken into account, of the actions implemented, of the processes engaged) is thus called to the rescue in debates that are often passionate, even if the different registers of legitimacy invoked rarely allow this concept to become the unquestionable means of arbitration of disputes, when the conflicts are not too great. The contextualized collective interest is thus constructed in an iterative way and obliges everyone, including the private sector, to position themselves in relation to societal issues and to justify their actions.

- **A better recognition of knowledge**

In this perspective of co-construction, local actors are not only bearers of needs and visions, but also of resources: experience, local roots, links with the population, skills, etc. Mobilizing these resources - in particular, bringing together the knowledge of civil society with that of technicians - or inscribing public action in a local history made up of a succession of experiences, poses methodological challenges. But this can also lead to the emergence of new ideas and strengthen the population's support for the chosen orientations. This "managerial" vision of dialogue between territorial actors presupposes a change in the posture and practices of elected officials and technicians, with a new distribution of roles between State and territorial agents. It outlines a more participatory democracy in the best of cases, even if it is sometimes applied in a constrained manner because it is imposed by the regulations.

- **Cooperative attitudes valued**

From the perspective of territorial governance, local development, environmental preservation or local resource management continue to be considered as part of the administration of common goods. However, this is no longer the sole responsibility of the central state. Rather, it is a matter of coordinating the actions of multiple decision-makers, whether they are acting in the name of the general interest or of their particular interest. There is therefore a certain risk of instrumentalization of the notion of the common good (we return to the question of the legitimacy of positions). Mormont (2006) has nevertheless shown the interest of the dynamics of local conflicts in the reframing of environmental problems. The main challenge of the dialogue process is to make decisions at different levels consistent. This process must result in a contractualization, more or less formalized, or at least in the harmonization of actions that are expected to "form a system". All of this must be done within a regulatory framework and with adherence to shared values defined by higher levels (the State, Europe) in order to give a "shared meaning" and ensure a certain coherence between territories. In this perspective, the search for cooperation between the actors of the territory becomes central because it is the condition for a better synergy in a fragmented decision-making system. Cooperative attitudes are valued, conviction replaces coercion, and horizontal exchange finds its place.

- **Mobilization and empowerment of local actors**

By giving a voice to actors from the associative world and the private sector and by granting them the status of partners of the public authorities, participatory governance practices make it possible to encourage initiatives. But they also contribute to the structuring of these actors, and even encourage their emergence. The "stakeholders", i.e. the collective actors most directly involved who accept strategies of cooperation (even if these do not eliminate power struggles and opposition), are likely to benefit from the game of territorial governance by seeing their position strengthened.

Is governance therefore inseparable from an understanding of the principle of sustainable development? According to Christian Brodhag, it is even the "fourth pillar of sustainable development" (Brodhag, 1999), along with economic efficiency, social equity and environmental preservation. While it is still premature to conclude in this sense, it can be noted that governance allows for a better understanding of certain mechanisms for developing a sustainable policy. Let us remember that the principle of sustainable development remains in itself a project. It is not a completed and invariable model that would be imposed at all times and in all places (Zuindeau, 2000). Even if the objectives and principles of action remain unavoidable, the way in which they are interpreted and their possible hierarchy are not self-evident. The reason for these differences may lie in the specificities of the geographical areas concerned, the presence of certain resources or the acuteness of certain problems, which orient the problem in a particular direction.

But it is above all the differences in arrangements between territorial actors that can explain these particular views and the variability of the resulting decisions. It is in this respect that the notion of governance can represent these ways of organizing interactions between territories and actors according to a certain conception of sustainability. Not only does governance make it possible to understand the way in which actors develop a policy, but it also emphasizes the importance of the formalism and democratic procedure in which it seems to have to take place. Despite the uncertainties that we have mentioned, governance tends to design a general framework of rules for elaboration (on the legal level, for example), but also according to a general political philosophy, that of deliberative democracy, involving the actors concerned in the decision-making process.

Governance thus offers the possibility of instituting an in-depth reflection on the mechanisms of elaboration of sustainable solutions, which cannot be conceived outside of a vast and ambitious strategy of consultation. The most recent work in the social sciences shows that the management of natural resources or the regulation of conflicts related to the environment can no longer be dissociated from the management of social relations within the communities concerned (De Carlo, 1997). The various local partners - institutions, associations, private sectors, etc. are increasingly resorting to contractual methods, combined with flexible forms of public arbitration between legitimate interests (Lascoumes, 1994; Callon et al., 2001). Consequently, it is important to focus on the study of the procedures used to develop these consultations and evaluate their results. The articulation of the themes of governance and sustainable development makes it possible to give new perspectives to environmental decision-making, taking into account the political, economic and geographical dimensions. Let us note that Morocco has made a big step on the participative democracy when it has given the possibility to the actors of the civil society to gather in the framework of the consultative instances at the level of the regional, provincial and communal council and this has allowed the actors to express themselves through consultative opinions which represent a tool of governance par excellence, because the civil society will be able to give proposals to improve the territorial programs and to attend all the meetings where the decisions of each collectivity is taken at the level of the

different sessions. We can say that the governance represents an ally of sustainable development and that its consideration will give to each territory the possibility to have a real sustainable territorial engineering.

2. Sustainability and the transformation of the territory

At the level of the most recent reports on the question, there is some paradox in wanting to deal with sustainable development "in practice" insofar as the actions, when they exist, remain limited and hardly of a nature to counterbalance the great socio-economic and environmental tendencies that affect the Planet in the direction of "non-sustainability". We are rather led here to a simulation exercise: in what way would sustainable development change the territory, if it were to spread in a significant way? However, this analysis, in a way "hypothetical", will also help to highlight a certain number of brakes which can explain the timidity of the actions. Non-sustainability can be considered from the point of view of a deterioration of the territory. The forms of this deterioration are highly differentiated and vary according to the spatial scale considered. If, at the global level, it is the "great" ecosystem regulations that are at stake (climate dynamics, biodiversity, especially, and their spatial translations), at scales such as a region or a locality, the territorial imprint of unsustainability may be manifested by an alteration of landscapes, the presence of wastelands, soil erosion, the degradation of watercourses, etc. (and we are limiting ourselves here to the environmental register). Logically, the progressive passage from "non-sustainability" to eventual sustainability should then result in a requalification of the territory, and one could take as illustrations the strict reverse of the negative examples given just now. The material dimension of the territory is obviously the most concerned. Natural spaces, in this case more or less anthropized, the living environment, the urban structure, are thus able to evolve favorably under the impulse of more sustainable policies.

However, the material dimension is not without interfering with the other dimensions of the territory, and in particular the functional dimension that is the economic one. Consequently, the material requalification of the territory is likely to influence a certain number of economic parameters, particularly those related to economic attractiveness. With forms of competition that are themselves evolving and moving away from an exclusive reference to costs and tending to give more weight to the intangible, to the quality of processes, to product differentiation and quality, etc. (Petit, 1998; Du Tertre, 1998), the quality of the territory, without limiting this issue to environmental quality alone, is becoming increasingly important with regard to the location and development of activities. The aim of irreproachable agri-food quality will thus have as a corollary the search for areas not affected by pollution (particularly with regard to water resources). The tertiary sector seeking to locate will also be attentive to significant environmental amenities and quality of life. The result of such trends is that sustainable development policies, by reshaping territories, will be likely to improve and not reduce, as an overly "reservationist" vision of sustainable development would suggest - the economic performance of the territory (Benhayoun et al., 1999 - see in particular the preface by Bernard Planque). Another important aspect of the issue, however, relates to the cost implications of sustainable development policies. It is clear, in fact, that if the implementation of sustainable development is aimed at reducing long-term costs, and in particular collective costs, we must not rule out the possibility that in the shorter term the measures applied tend to weigh on economic costs, particularly those incurred by private agents. In other words, even if, as we have just seen, a territory can in the more or less long term benefit from a requalification, itself conducive to subsequent economic advantages, it is possible that in the shorter term the cost of sustainable development policies affects the territory from which they emanate and harms, in particular, its external

competitiveness. There are, in fact, two complementary aspects to this potential problem. First, we must ask ourselves whether the cost of the measures taken actually leads, in the short term, to a negative net cost. On the contrary, many examples of companies show that compensation is possible, offsetting the costs incurred by direct financial benefits: reduction of expenses induced by a lower consumption of natural resources, recovery of waste creating new revenues, etc. Another possibility for financial compensation is the reduction of taxes (e.g., taxes or social charges on labor) or the granting of subsidies that promote greater environmental awareness. In the end, it is rather difficult to conclude whether there is a net cost or benefit associated with taking measures to promote sustainable development (or in the above examples, the environment). Within the economic literature, there has been a controversy for a good ten years, opposing the proponents of the "win-win" approach - those who believe that measures in favour of the environment also generate economic benefits for companies (Porter, Van der Linde, 1995, for example) - and those who believe that, overall, the financial benefits are not able to compensate for the costs incurred (Oates et al., 1995); this net cost does not, however, call into question the merits of the policies concerned. The fact remains that if a sustainable development policy is decided unilaterally in a territory, there is a risk that the territory in question will suffer a relative loss of external competitiveness.

This leads logically to the second aspect of the question. To offset the risk of a loss of economic competitiveness of the initiating territory, and thus to overcome a major obstacle to the implementation of sustainable development actions, a concerted inter-territorial strategy is desirable. This is the only way to maintain the balance between the different areas, viewed from the perspective of their economic functionality. It is also the only way to improve the effectiveness of actions aimed at transboundary problems (e.g. global pollution), which can only be resolved if the space of policies tends to coincide with the space of problems (see above). Cooperation between territories is thus required. Taking up the multidimensional approach of the territory, we will say that the mutations of the territory, in its material and functional dimensions, call for a transformation of this same territory in its organizational dimension. The sustainable development approach has not forgotten this important issue and generally calls for new governance to address it.

In all cases, an arbitration taking into account the local characteristics is necessary. When implementing sustainable development in a defined area, whether it is perceived locally or not, it is necessary to question the type of sustainability to be implemented. We will not deal with problems in the same way under strong sustainability or weak sustainability.

3. Resource efficiency

Let us briefly review the use of resources. The resources of societies are constantly evolving according to the technical progress made. Some resources are said to be strategic because they can be used in the near future, others are said to be unusable for various reasons (cultural, technical, sanitary...) and others are not yet known. Defining an inventory of resources seems essential.

I think we can define types of sustainable development based on these three variables. We can give a coherent trajectory to sustainable development in a given territory from the moment we can answer these three questions: what kind of governance is it? What type of sustainability is it? What is my inventory of available resources? By answering each of these questions, a trajectory emerges.

What are the usual characteristics and consequences of a regional development culture?

The first characteristic of a development culture is that it produces an institutional force field in the region that galvanizes energies, identifies resources, and channels them toward a particular goal around which an appearance of consensus is created. An important function of a development culture

is to define the resource space and choose which resources to mobilize first. Several questions remain: - Is the domain of specific resources narrow or is it likely to encompass any socioeconomic characteristic? - Does a local resource have to meet specific conditions to participate in development? To objectively assess the emulation and the degree of mobilization (sometimes considered ideological) of resources, it is necessary to consult the documentation relating to regional foresight and planning (SRAT; State-Region Development Contracts; territorial diagnoses; foresight exercises; territorial marketing materials, etc.), as well as numerous regional studies and monographs.

The second characteristic of the development culture is that at a given time it favors a sector of activity or even a real or supposed regional development model. All the resources mobilized (traditions, heritage, regional language, etc.) are directed as a priority towards a specific development objective (industrial sector, tourism, international cooperation, etc.). All the planning and development institutions find their main references in it as well as a legitimization of their action. In this context, each territory is led to carry out a diagnosis prior to public policies, to better understand its profile (strengths and weaknesses), to identify its opportunities, to define its development culture (by analogy with the corporate culture but applied to the territory). The demographic profile of the population (young/old, sedentary/mobile, qualified/unskilled) is a determining element. Surprisingly, the development culture is not immediately correlated with the economic performance of the region. For example, not all French territories are destined to become "RIS" according to COOK (1998) or successful and attractive learning regions (FLORIDA, 1995), but they are all trying in their own way to become part of the knowledge economy and demonstrate a certain capacity to mobilize the main elements of the regional culture in order to put them to use in local development. The culture of development does not necessarily imply remarkable economic performance. If "winning regions" offer examples to follow, less successful territories and marginal areas are not left behind. Development that can ensure economic growth, a sufficient level of employment and better social cohesion at the same time has become the major concern of local and regional institutions.

The development culture of a region is fundamentally a culture. It is not the result of a specific political orientation, it emanates from the long term, it is necessarily linked to history, to the characteristics of the population and the regional institutions. The culture of development is often marked by a specific model. It must therefore reconcile the stability of local institutions and openness to change. "Culture is first and foremost an affirmation of identity, invention and creativity, a confrontation with the past, the present and the future, and at the same time an expression of the singular destiny of each society, each individual and each community, and an openness to universality and human expression.

The culture of development not only has an impact on the performance of the regional economy, but it also changes the perception and place of other local cultural forms. It allows them to be reinterpreted and renewed. As an example of this retroactive loop of the economy on culture, regional languages are in some cases no longer evaluated according to their capacity to foster communication between regional speakers but on the basis of performance criteria in the economic sphere (HUCK and KAHN, 2009).

Morocco has thus developed a new territorial vision that allows each region to have its own territorial development program, especially after the launch of the major project of advanced regionalization, which takes into consideration the principles of good governance and all the variables of sustainability. It gives the possibility to each territory to have its own action plan, and to build a brand and a territorial identity that represents the potential of each territory in order to ensure a better use of resources and areal involvement of all local actors at the level of the different sectors of activities.

In order to bring all these variables together, we will present a strategic diagram that could constitute

a territorial engineering tool for better local management.

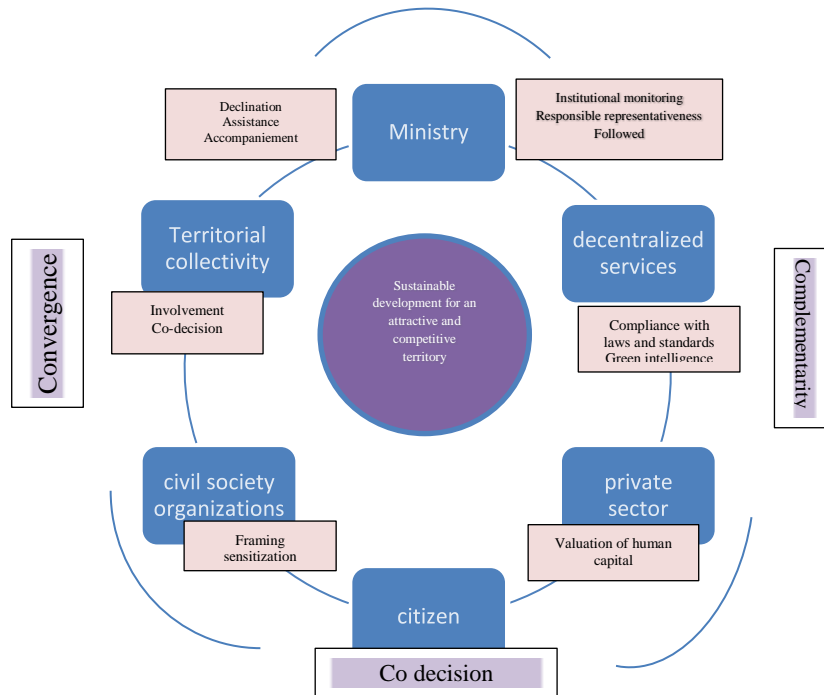


Figure 1: model of an inclusive sustainable development strategy

Conclusion

The challenge of this new territorial configuration, of the new relationship between the State and its territories, lies in the capacity to articulate territories, territorial authorities and decentralized projects. For the moment, the interlocking of territorialized public policies is not well thought out. It often boils down to a principled subsidiarity with regard to national policies that are still defined in a sectoral mode. The intermediate, meso-territorial levels, such as the region or the prefectures, are therefore, it seems to us, the stumbling blocks of this new territorial architecture.

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